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# Forbes takes the helm of Radio Free Europe

By Ed Rogers  
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Malcolm Forbes Jr., magazine executive and business writer, was designated by President Reagan yesterday as chairman of the Board for International Broadcasting, which oversees the operation of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty.

Mr. Forbes, a board member since 1983, took over as chairman immediately. Only his original board membership required Senate confirmation. He succeeded Frank Shakespeare, who will be sworn in Thursday as ambassador to Portugal.

In separate interviews, both men spoke of feeling awe toward the job of providing the people of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union with virtually their only regular source of uncensored news.

"It is an awesome responsibility ... in terms of impact on the lives of a number of people," Mr. Forbes said.

"All of the members of the board just feel awed by the responsibility ...," Mr. Shakespeare said.

"It is vitally important that those people in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union know that the West cares and that they can get the news and analysis from these radios that

they can't get from their own radios," Mr. Forbes added.

"We are a surrogate radio for these people," he said.

The two stations beam broadcasts around the clock from Munich, West Germany — Radio Free Europe in six languages for Eastern Europe and Radio Liberty in 15 languages for the Soviet Union. Their combined fiscal 1986 budgets total \$98 million.

Mr. Shakespeare said the audience level in Eastern Europe, where every household has a radio, is about 60 percent.

"That sort of audience level is simply extraordinary in broadcasting or any other medium," he said.

"One of the problems we face constantly," Mr. Forbes said, "is jamming by the Soviets. They make it quite clear they don't like them and make an enormous effort to jam those broadcasts."

The cost of continual jamming by sophisticated long-range "skywave" stations and a network of short-range local stations is estimated to be more than double the combined broadcast budgets of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty.

The radio operations are continuing to recover from fiscal neglect in the late 1960s and early 1970s that

left them understaffed and handicapped by antiquated equipment, Mr. Forbes said.

The problem was worsened by "backlash" from scandals involving the CIA, he said.

"The radios years ago were financed by the CIA, and were tarred with that brush," Forbes said. "In recent years, the radios have had improved budgets. The equipment is being upgraded and that will be continued."

Mr. Forbes attributed his selection to head the nine-member board to his position on Forbes magazine. Mr. Forbes is president of Forbes Inc. and deputy editor-in-chief of Forbes magazine.

"We are in the communications business," Mr. Forbes said. "I now write about business and economics, which is obviously of central importance to the people of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union."

Mr. Shakespeare confirmed this view, and highlighted it by citing the three times that Mr. Forbes has won the U.S. Steel award for the most accurate forecasts of economic conditions. No other person has won it even twice.

"He has been an especially effective and involved board member and has won the respect of a very powerful board, of which he is the youngest by far," Mr. Shakespeare said. Mr. Forbes is 38.

"That is a very high-powered group of people and Forbes has won their total respect," Mr. Shakespeare said. "We feel very strongly that it is a marvelous appointment."